



Corporate Report

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DATE: January 11, 2005

TO: Chairman and Members of Planning and Development Committee
Meeting Date: January 31, 2005

FROM: Edward R. Sajecki
Commissioner of Planning and Building

SUBJECT: **Housing Matters: Density**

ORIGIN: Planning and Building Department

BACKGROUND: Mississauga is entering a new phase of its development history. The last of the City's greenfields are now being developed and increases to the housing stock will involve the development of remaining vacant land parcels, more intense use of developed lands and redevelopment.

The Province is proposing to limit expansions to the urban boundary (settlement area) in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and is looking to municipalities such as Mississauga to accommodate additional development through intensification, infill and redevelopment.

In recognition of the development demands facing the City in the future, a series of four housing studies are being prepared. The focus of the first study is to examine where Mississauga is today and how it got there. Specifically, it provides detailed information regarding current density levels across the City's residential communities and compares these figures with levels purported to represent desirable development standards and levels achieved in other jurisdictions. This study presents a snapshot in the City's development and will serve as a benchmark for future growth.

(Information on current density levels will be required in the future as part of the Growth Management Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.)

The second study will examine the City's housing opportunities. It will identify options for increasing the City's housing stock and the impact these options will have for infrastructure needs and on density levels.

(The potential for intensification and redevelopment will be required under the Provincial Policy Statement for consideration of expansions to urban boundaries within the Greater Golden Horseshoe.)

The third study will examine the housing needs of the community. In the past, the housing industry generally targeted persons moving to Mississauga to raise a family. While Mississauga will continue to attract new residents, future housing requirements will increasingly be defined by the changing needs of the people that already live here. This study will examine how well the existing housing stock will accommodate these needs.

The housing series will conclude with a housing strategy. Based on the existing housing stock, the opportunities to add to this stock and the needs of the community, this study will develop a blueprint for future housing development. It will identify the amount, type and location of additions to the City's housing stock.

Attached under separate cover is the first study titled "*Housing Matters: Density*".

COMMENTS: Highlights from the study titled "*Housing Matters: Density*" are outlined below.

- Nineteenth century cities were infamous for their overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. Garden cities with separated land uses and homes surrounded by green spaces were seen not only as the solution to these issues but were viewed as good planning. After World War II consumer preferences, growing affluence and the influence of the automobile were among the trends that changed development patterns. Suburban communities and the

lifestyle they represented became the aspiration for many Ontario families. These aspirations translated into demand for housing and resulted in suburban development being the dominant development form for the last half century.

- The land consumed for residential development extends beyond the land occupied by homes to lands that are required to meet the social and recreational needs of residents and for the infrastructure that supports the community. The amount of land devoted to these uses influences the residential density.
- Development standards such as road widths and areas dedicated for recreation and open space implement development objectives and policies. Consumer demands, safety concerns and lifestyle choices have lead to increases in the land consumed by development standards.
- A review of communities conducted for the *Urban Density Study* (prepared by the Office for the Greater Toronto Area) found that communities developed before World War II, the amount of gross land devoted to public purposes ranged between 30% and 41%. This compared with between 41% and 51% of land for public purposes in communities developed since World War II.
- Development that is compact in nature and promotes an efficient use of resources is the principal solution anticipated to address issues arising from the dominant development patterns over the last fifty years.
- Density is the most common method used to measure compactness and is used as a tool to establish benchmarks to guide future development. It describes the relationship between the number of dwelling units or residents and the amount of land occupied. Density figures are indicators, however, often the method used to calculate densities is not explained, which detracts from their usefulness.

- Four density calculations are included in this study: net density; net plus roads density; community density; and gross density. Residential unit data and land areas for these variables are from in-house development monitoring and existing land use data. Population densities are calculated using Statistics Canada 2001 Census data for the widely recognized quality of their data and its comparability with other municipalities. Densities for the City of Mississauga are summarized in the following table.

Existing Residential Density - City of Mississauga				
	Dwelling Unit Density (Based on 2003 Residential Units)		Population Density (Based on 2001 Census Population)	
	Units/ Hectare	Units/ Acre	People/ Hectare	People/ Acre
Net Density	26.2	10.6	74.9	30.3
Net Plus Roads Density	17.6	7.3	50.2	20.8
Community Density	12.7	5.3	36.3	15.0
Gross Density	11.8	4.9	33.7	14.0

Note: Existing residential densities are based on the combined review of planning district densities and traffic zone densities.

- Net density for the City of Mississauga is 26.2 uph (10.6 upa) which relates to the high end of most Low Density Residential II and the low end of the most Medium Density designations in Mississauga Plan. These designations permit detached, semi-detached homes and townhomes. Community density is 12.7 uph (5.3 upa). The decline in the density variable represents the effect of roads and non-residential land uses such as commercial, office, community, institutional and open space.
- A recent review of land supply in the GTA-Hamilton area indicated that Mississauga had the third highest density.¹ Toronto and Hamilton are ranked first and second, respectively. The decline in the densities from Toronto and Hamilton to Mississauga is reflective of the fact that Toronto

¹ In that review titled Analysis of Land Supply in the GTA - Hamilton Area. (July 2004) by Malone Given Parsons Limited for the Urban Development Institute, the density is calculated excluding major open space corridors, major institutional uses such as airports, train yards and employment/industrial lands. This corresponds to the community density study calculated for this report.

and Hamilton were industrial centres that developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mississauga developed later with different development standards.

- Mississauga has the largest supply of housing outside of Toronto. As well, the mix of housing in Mississauga is one of the most diverse in the GTA-Hamilton and second only to Toronto in terms of diversity and its proportion of apartments. Mississauga alone has more apartment units than Brampton, Oshawa, Burlington and Oakville combined. Hamilton has a significant proportion of apartments and single detached units but a smaller proportion of alternative forms of ground-related units.
- The pre-war areas of Toronto, which are often presented as standards to emulate, have densities in the range of over 20 uph (8 upa). This study's review of densities by traffic zone has found that 13% of the traffic zones in Mississauga have densities over 20 uph (8 upa). As well, many of these higher density traffic zones were developed several decades later.
- Transit-supportive densities are in the range of 10 uph (4 upa) for one-hour service and 30 uph (12 upa) for rapid transit during peak times. When comparing the densities by traffic zone with transit-supportive density guidelines, many of the traffic zones fall into the one-hour service categories. Higher density corridors along Burnhamthorpe Road, Dundas Street and Erin Mills Parkway are among the areas where densities fall into the ranges required for thirty-minute service levels (17 to 19 uph, 7 to 8 upa). This is a challenge the City will need to address to succeed in encouraging people out of their cars and into public transit.
- In order to capture the variations and changes in density over time, as well as the effect of non-residential land uses on densities, profiles of twenty-eight communities in the City have been prepared for this study.

- Many of the communities developed in the 1950s and 1960s saw homes built on large lots. Community densities of below 15 uph (6 upa) are found in the majority of areas that developed during the 1950s. During the 1960s, the majority of the densities are from 10 uph (4 upa) to 18 uph (8 upa).
- During the 1970s concerns for alternative, reasonably priced housing influenced the development of communities like Mississauga Valleys. With a community density of 27.0 uph (10.9 upa), Mississauga Valleys has the highest density of all the communities profiled. Communities built in the 1970s with lower densities are the result of the mix of land uses and the protection of environmentally sensitive lands which resulted in less land available for development.
- Neighbourhoods developed during the 1980s have densities between 8 uph (3 upa) and 12 upa (5 upa) and are in the low density range. The baby-boom generation was well into its household formation years at this time and exerted a strong market demand for ground-related units.
- During the 1990s and into the 2000s, the lowest typical community density is 14.4 uph (5.8 upa). Densities below this range are the result of land use mix and environmental protection issues. Many communities developed during this time are designed according to neo-traditional or new urbanism principles. For example, North Churchill Meadows has a unit density of 18.5 uph (7.5 upa).
- The land use and mix of units has varied considerably and, therefore, definitive densities associated with particular time periods are difficult to capture. However, as a general observation, densities have increased over time, particularly in communities with no significant land use issues such as the preservation of a major environmental feature.
- The mix of units is one of the most important factors in the densities achieved. The residential mix of units has in large part been influenced by consumer preferences for ground-related units. While Mississauga's housing stock offers a range of ground-related housing options, in one-third of the communities profiled there are no high density units.

- Land use in the nodes is a mix of residential and non-residential uses including commercial, office, school, institutional and open space. The densities achieved in the nodes correspond with the High Density designations in Mississauga Plan. With the exception of the Central Erin Mills and Streetsville nodes, all the residential unit community densities are above 25 uph (10 upa). The highest is the Hurontario node. The range of employment densities in the nodes is from 105.1 eph (42.5 epa) in City Centre to 12.2 eph (7.1 epa) in Erin Mills.
- Mississauga City Centre has been identified as a Priority Urban Centre in the *Places to Grow – A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* discussion paper. This paper establishes targets of 60 eph (24 eph) and 60 pph (24 ppa) in Priority Urban Centres. City Centre has a node employment density of 105.1 eph (42.5 epa). According to 2003 forecast data, City Centre has a population density of 46.6 pph (18.8 ppa). However, based on current activity and development applications, City Centre could achieve a gross potential population density of 144.4 pph (58.4 ppa). In addition, City Centre has significant development capacity which would further increase densities. *Therefore, the City Centre now exceeds the target for employment density and will be able to meet and eventually exceed the proposed population density targets.*
- Two-thirds of the nodes meet the transit-supportive densities of 30 uph (12 upa) for rapid transit during peak times. City Centre does not yet meet these guidelines, however, when current units under construction and application are occupied, City Centre will have a gross unit density of 63.6 uph (25.7 upa).
- City Centre meets the transit-supportive density goal for Priority Urban Centres of 3,000 persons per sq. km (7,770 per sq. mile). The City Centre's 2003 population was 3,632 persons per sq. km (9,407 per sq. mile).

- The nodes and City Centre meet Mississauga Plan objectives particularly in relation to intensity of land use, however, opportunities remain to improve the functioning of the nodes. The population-to-employment ratio is weighted toward residents rather than a more balanced one-to-one ratio. Many of the nodes are focussed around regional centres, which are large consumers of land and where there are large distances between buildings to meet the demand for parking. These features act as a deterrent to a tight-knit, pedestrian environment. In nodes such as Port Credit and Streetsville, the pedestrian-orientation of the node is linked to its historic function. Some nodes are in the process of intensifying by de-malling and by re-developing some of the parking facilities. This could result in the full potential of these nodes being realized in time.

CONCLUSION:

Mississauga has been the subject of criticism regarding the densities and the type of residential development. It is often compared disfavourably with other cities which have achieved higher residential densities and is often cited as an example of urban sprawl. However, Mississauga has the third highest density in the GTA-Hamilton region and is second in terms of the number and diversity of its housing units. Its densities, which are lower than densities in Toronto and Hamilton, are a reflection of the standards of the time.

In addition, one of the basic characteristics of sprawl is where the proportion of land developed outpaces the proportion of population growth. Between 1990 and 2003, the population growth in Mississauga (45%) exceeded the total residential land area developed (24%).

In summary, Mississauga does not merit the reputation as an example of urban sprawl. It is a city with a number of distinct communities, reasonable diversity of housing types and a range of densities. It is a young City, and, in large part, its urban form and structure is a product of the automobile age. Consumer preferences, the planning environment and broader issues in society have all contributed to the landscape of the City.

Mississauga is at a juncture in its development. The last greenfields are now being completed and future development will involve developing vacant land parcels in established communities, more intense use of developed lands and redevelopment.

Undoubtedly, housing densities in Mississauga will increase. The challenge will be to accommodate additional housing in a manner that achieves the benefits of a more compact urban form while retaining and enhancing the characteristics of the residential communities that make them unique and desirable places in which to live.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report titled "*Housing Matters: Density*", dated January 11, 2005 from the Commissioner of Planning and Building, be received.

Original Signed By:

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Commissioner of Planning and Building